

The African flavour revival – from nostalgic rediscovery to food with a future

By [Smiso Ndlovu](#)

26 Jan 2024

For too long, the joy of local cuisine was confined to home kitchens. But as consumers increasingly seek out the nostalgia of their favourite home cooked meals and flavour, the food and beverage sector is rallying to give authentic African taste its rightful place at the table.



Smiso Ndlovu, executive chef at Kerry Southern Africa. Image supplied.

As more local flavours increasingly become available in retail, on restaurant menus and are skillfully packaged in a variety of snacks and beverages – it creates the opportunity to reconsider nutritiously superior ingredients that were once overlooked or forgotten.

Baobab, beans, imfino, marula, millet, mopane worms, moringa, sorghum, and umhlonyane are all making a triumphant return, gaining recognition for their nutritional value, and increased consideration from local palettes. Deeply rooted in African culture, and symbols of the continent's culinary revitalisation, these and other ingredients have the potential to offer healthier alternatives – for people and the planet.

Using local ingredients enriches the culinary landscape and celebrates cultural heritage, while playing a pivotal role in promoting sustainability. By sourcing locally, we reduce our carbon footprint, support local farmers, producers and preserve biodiversity.

Creating food with a future, calls for a focus on three core areas:

A synergy of tradition and science

While the nutritional benefits of some local ingredients have been celebrated by generations, scientific analysis is required to substantiate the hidden health benefits to assist in securing commercial buy-in and ensure the safe integration into our diets.

Clinical studies to understand exactly what is in these ingredients and investigate the nutritional benefits and health outcomes, are a vital step to empower the industry to make informed decisions around serving recommendations, complimentary pairings, and dosage.

By substantiating the nutritional value of, for example, beans and Imfino, we can empower communities and customers to embrace sustainable, locally sourced options, to pave the way for a future where our plates are not just filled but nourished in a positive way.

Fusing tradition with modernisation

There's something magical about the way indigenous ingredients and age-old cooking techniques can transform a simple dish into a culinary masterpiece.

The authentic, nostalgic, and warm sensation of a favourite meal or experience was once a world away from today's manufacturing realities. But by using expertly crafted cooking methods, food can once again taste just as good as our best memories.

That means looking beyond the ingredients – the right cut of meat, and garden herbs - to considering the type of wood used to braai in specific regions, or capturing the subtle, but unmistakable taste of cooking in a cast iron potjie pot or tapping into fermentation processes of dairy and heritage grains like sorghum.

It calls for modernising to create food and flavour that remains true to nostalgia but making it faster and smarter to be able to offer it at scale, and at an affordable price.

Kerry, a global leader in taste and nutrition innovation, has a unique knowledge of how food can be transformed with time and heat to create savoury flavours. Our innovation chefs and research, development and application teams are continuously delivering the memorable and nostalgic taste experiences captured in a beloved dish from the most basic and primal materials on earth.

Honouring local palates

Being relevant is more important than ever. That is why, at Kerry, we eat the streets to understand local tastes. With consumers ready to embrace the taste profiles of the traditional food they grew up with, the industry needs to adapt faster.

Tapping into emerging technologies can provide near real-time insights, to make decisions and direct innovation to create solutions that are tailored for them and their lifestyles.

Annually, Kerry harnesses these insights in collaboration with research teams, marketers, chefs, baristas, mixologists and nutritionists to make well-founded predictions about future flavour and ingredient preferences.

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